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# THE CRAYON.

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## INDIVIDUALITY IN ART.

THERE is probably no person of ordinary intellectual capacity who has not some *peculiar* quality of perception, and who does not thence see in the outer world something which the great majority of men do not. We do not know if it be necessary to inquire into the philosophy of this—but it will be generally acknowledged, without discussion, that into almost all men's souls there come some images or impressions from the external, in the enjoyment of which they find that they stand nearly alone, or accompanied by a small class at best.

This, in the Artist, gives rise to that which we call originality of conception. By this "diversity of gifts" is each gifted one made the bearer of some message of beauty to his race; and on his expressing that clearly, depends the fulfillment of his mission. We are fully aware that, to the great mass of men, this "fulfillment of mission" seems a mere poetic expression of an absurdity—we are aware too, that few artists consider that they have any mission to fulfill, or will believe it when told so. It doesn't alter the case at all. "Duty" and "mission" are terms synonymous with "bore" to all but those who embrace them—to them they become delight, and to them we have something to say which the others also may listen to, if they will.

It is absolutely true, that every man who has been given the function of an artist, has, committed to his perceptions, some truth of Nature, which he, feeling more acutely than any other, will be better able to tell the world, and which, being neglected by him, will be lost, perhaps for ever. It is that which gives him his originality—which makes him individual in Art. Now, if the artist have no thought of duty—no regard whether he shall do that for which he has been fitted and sent into the world the manner of man that he is, it is still worth his while to consider that it is only by developing that which is peculiar to him, that he can hope to stand out from the mass and be estimated by his proper standard.

To be original is, then, not only a necessity to permanent success, but essential to give one's self a genuine existence in the world of Art. What is an imitator, or a fol-

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lower of genius, but an echo—a repetition in weaker terms of something already told, measured, not by advance, but by the distance he has fallen *behind* the original, and never for one moment taken into account in assigning the position of a school, or an era in Art. Yet in despite this palpable truth, there is a large portion of the artists of this and every other country, who are willing to be considered the satellites of a greater star, rather than be in and of themselves lesser lights, however true or justly placed.

It is idle to say, as many do, that it is of slight importance whether such artists are lost or not, since they are but of little moment. There is place for the little as well as the great—there are subordinate as well as chief offices in the economy of Nature, and minute truths as essential to the *completeness* of her revelation as greater ones. To the perfection of the teachings of Art, it is as necessary that the message of the moss or the lichen should be told, as it is that we should hear that of the mountain and the thunder cloud. To every order of mind is given its order of truth, which it can in no wise neglect that it may listen to and echo the mightier eloquence of a soul of grander gift, without having failed in the purpose for which it was created.

If we are felt by the world, it must be by our own individuality; and if we have but one thing to tell, and that of the humblest, let *that* at least be perfectly told. It would do us good to remember that men judge of things by their perfection in their own kind, and not by comparison with other kinds; not disparaging the violet because it is no oak, but loving the perfect flower far more than the imperfect tree.

A wonder is often expressed by unthinking people, that an artist should have sprung up and reached an eminence in his vocation away from other artists and works of Art; while the wonder would have been, that he could have ever arrived at greatness under the influence of other minds enlisted in the same pursuit. The man who, unbiased by the brilliant accomplishments of another, works calmly by his own light, not knowing or caring if there be in the wide world another who sympathizes with him or could guide him, will as assuredly accomplish something worthy as his labors

are sincere. It does not matter, if in the seclusion of some wild forest his feeling has been attracted to the mosses on the decaying trees, and he spend his lifetime in the study of the beauty they contain for him; he will do that which we will recognize as noble, and acknowledge to be the work of genius; while, under the influence of schools, he might have been won over from Nature by the showy beauties of mere Art, and so have been lost to us for ever.

Nor is it only the weak who are so led and lost. It often happens that a mind of genuine power, from too great humility in the estimation of its own worth, and a ready recognition of that of others—both common qualities with true genius—raises an idol from its fellows, and so shuts out the true object of the artist's worship—pure, unalloyed Nature. The influence of schools and masters, we believe to be almost without exception unfortunate, since to submit ourselves to the teachings of a fellow man, is to lay aside our own standard of judgment, and adopt one which, not being based on the same perceptive powers as our own, can by no possibility come to the same conclusions with regard to Nature.

A word of genuine heart-felt truth is better than any amount of imparted information—to know and realize the vitality and beauty of a roadside flower, is more satisfying than to repeat the mysteries of the universe, from another's lips; and so to fill truly the lowest place in the ranks of the true seers of nature, is more noble than to be one among those who wait on another's genius, however glorious it may be.

## Sketches

### OF THE GREAT MASTERS.

#### CORREGGIO.

GRACE and harmony wait on Correggio, and distinguish him among all others. His style, however, is compounded of many traits, and can hardly be described by two epithets. Sensibility—joyousness—tenderness of sentiment, with a leaning to love and pleasure, belong to this painter. He is susceptible to the softer passions, seldom sad, but cheerful, as if elated and blissful, sometimes even gay and frolicsome, almost to the verge of girlish affectation. He is occasionally grand, stately and vigorous, but oftener soft, winning and voluptuous.

and these qualities will be found in his ideas—his subjects, the forms he chooses, and the effects and colors with which he invests them. His harmony results chiefly from the soft flow of light subsiding gradually into the deepest shades. Broad and massive treatment of the light and dark, with bold foreshortening, combine to give relief and roundness; and the whole is aided by a light, pearly impasted underpainting, which shines from every part, giving a silvery tinge to his warmest glow, and sanctifying the luscious fullness of his deepest glazings. The technical management of his work sprang naturally from his temper of soul; for he seems to have been gentle, cheerful, genial and enthusiastic, devoted to his wife and family, whom he painted repeatedly in his compositions, and a close observer of the artless ways of children, whose unstudied graces he has caught with a felicity quite unknown before, and scarcely equalled since, except by Reynolds. His amiable and affectionate disposition is proved by his having stood sponsor for the infants of his friends four times before he was twenty-two years old. Neither is he wanting in power and grandeur, as witness the majestic forms of the Apostles in the dome of Parma; or in an occasional sharpness and abruptness which saves from insipidity, and adds by opposition to the general suavity and fusion. By his curving lines, rounded forms, sweet gradations of light and delicate harmonies of color, we are reminded of concerts of music where soft airs and instruments prevail, and lull the charmed listener

"With the sound  
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet."

His cheerful spirit is shown in the happy expression of his Madonnas, with their placid open brows and naïve smile, in his cherubs inclined to be arch and frolicsome, and his festoons of flowers and pleasant fruits, painted with lively truth. The passionate ardor of his Magdalens, his angels beaming with joy and hymning songs of praise, his venerable saints wrapt in devout adoration, yet never severe or ascetic, but seeming to be entranced with some beatific vision—these all bespeak his love for a happy, cheering view of life and religion.

Antonio Allegri was born at Correggio, near Parma, in 1494. The family name, Allegri or *latus* (joyful) is merged in that of Correggio, his native city. His father, Pellegrino, is said by Vasari to have been poor and mean, and Antonio himself, to have lived in poverty and misery, to have been ill-appreciated as an artist, and to have died from the effect of fatigue and fever, brought on by carrying on foot from Parma to Correggio a heavy weight of copper coin, paid to him maliciously by the monks of St. John. In support of these statements, a remark of Annibal Carracci is quoted, where he says in writing to his brother Agostino, "I rage and weep to think of the misfortunes of poor Antonio; so great a man (if indeed he was a man, and not an angel in the flesh), to be lost here in a country where he was unknown, and, though worthy of immortality, here to die unhappily." Later researches have shown that his father was a thriving man. Pellegrino began as a retail tradesman, and represented that class early in his career, being elected by them to present their annual

offering to the city's patron saint in 1518. Two years after, he had so increased in wealth and honor, as to be chosen by the higher class of merchants to represent their body in this dignified office. He was able to give his daughter a present of a hundred ducats of gold on her marriage, and to enter with his son-in-law on the renting of an extensive farm.

Little is known of the youth of Correggio. His uncle Lorenzo was a painter, but probably one of a low grade, since one of his pictures meant for a lion was mistaken for a goat. Even the most wretched sign painter, however, would have known something of the mixture of colors, and the workshop of such a daub would seem like an enchanted palace to a boy who had a fondness for Art, and whose eye for painting was being developed. He studied rhetoric, and various branches of polite letters, under Berni and Marastini when young, and later, pursued anatomy under his intimate friend Dr. Lombardi, a native also of Correggio, sometime professor at Bologna, and finally settled as physician to Nicolo, the reigning prince of Correggio. Several artists of merit flourished in that town at the period of Antonio's childhood; and in their works we may find something which biased his mind. One Bartolotto was esteemed, and a picture of his is extant, from which a hint may be taken of the prevailing sentiment of the time. It represents an angel presenting a basket of cherries to the Virgin and child, with other saints standing near; branches of palm and some rabbits are introduced, and the grace of the heads, and the foreshortening of the infant's legs, are quite in Correggio's way. It must not be forgotten, in considering the influences that moulded Correggio, that Mantegna was living when Antonio was a child, and that he saw many of his works at Mantua and elsewhere: for he accompanied Manfredi, prince of Correggio, to Mantua in 1511, when his native city was visited by the plague. Besides the works of Mantegna, there was at Mantua a rich collection of cameos, medals and antiquities, in possession of the Princess Isabella d'Este; and being there as the friend and companion of Prince Manfredi, every opportunity for study must have been open to the young painter, whose gentle manners and devotion to his art, would of themselves have won the regard of a Princess renowned for her taste and generosity.

His progress was rapid in the art. At the age of twenty he was selected to paint an altar-piece for the Franciscan Convent of Minor Friars, at the price of one hundred gold ducats, a high price at that day for a young man—equivalent, considering the difference in value of money, to at least fifteen hundred dollars at the present time in New-York.

Soon after this, he married (common accident to young painters) the Signorina Girolama Merlini, a girl of great beauty, and of a family of note, who brought for dowry a share in certain houses and lands. The Madonna in the small picture called Zingarella (gipsy), is a portrait of her; and indeed many of his female heads bear some resemblance to the same type. This lovely wife brought him a son and daughter, the originals of those beautiful cherubs and cupids, whose arch smile, roguish eyes, and graceful motions, have charmed the lovers

of Art in all countries to our time. All the Art of Lombardy seems to have been of a cheerful turn. There is a sympathy between the smiling Madonnas of Da Vinci and those of Correggio, and the Venetian Virgins partake yet more of this world's joys. No sooner had our painter executed the altar-piece above named, and other similar ones, than his fame spread to the neighboring cities, and he was invited to Parma to paint an apartment in the Monastery of St. Paul, a convent of nuns under the charge of Lady Abbess Giovanna Piacenza, a person of taste and munificence, noted for her culture of talent, and who wished to adorn St. Paul's with something rare, by the hand of this new and rising genius. She gave him subjects from classic poetry; and young Antonio found himself engaged to paint the Fates—the graces—satyrs—vestals—cupids sporting with animals, and Juno suspended naked from the clouds, with the anvils at her feet bound with the golden chain indissoluble, as described by Homer in the Iliad, where Jove exclaims:

"Hast thou forgotten how I once aloft  
Suspended thee, with anvils at thy feet  
And both thy wrists bound with a golden cord?"

Besides, there was Fortune on a globe, and the chaste Diana drawn by white deer in a car of triumph, her slight drapery scarcely concealing her graceful form. These frescoes are now much injured, but their remains exhibit a fascinating grace of design, roundness of effect, and playful warmth of expression worthy of Anacreon himself. It may be thought strange that such profane subjects should be chosen for a convent of nuns, but that period was not over strict in morals; the nuns of that day were often entirely unguarded; an Abbess might dally freely with the world's pleasures; they were often princesses, keeping up luxurious establishments and indulging elegant tastes. The admiration caused by these works, so rich and satisfactory to eyes hitherto used only to the meagre and timid efforts of Mantegna and Bianchi, soon brought Antonio great commissions. The monks of St. John engaged him to paint the cupola of their church with a fresco of the ascension of Christ. On this noble work he was employed more or less for about four years, was paid 272 gold ducats, and 200 more for subsequent ornamentation, equal, in all to about \$7,000 in our day, if we measure by the relative value of the means of life. The monks were so pleased they voted him a patent of confraternity, a privilege eagerly sought for in those days, and granted only to persons of rank, genius, or great benevolence, since it conferred a participation in all the spiritual benefits arising from the prayers, alms, masses, and other pious labors of the brotherhood, and bound them to do the same for the repose of his soul, as for that of an actual monk of the order. In this fresco Antonio struck out into a larger, fuller, and grander style, and the boldest foreshortening. In the centre of the dome he drew Christ floating in glory; beneath, on clouds, sat the Apostles contemplating and adoring; the Evangelists and four Latin fathers occupy lunettes. The whole is lighted from below, there being no windows in the dome itself. Superb engravings of this have recently appeared by the Cavaliere Toschi.

At about this period he painted the Ma-

donna della Scala, also beautifully engraved by Toschi. This was originally executed in the house of a friend, and became afterwards such a favorite devotional picture that the house was converted into a chapel, and twelve stairs built by which to reach it; hence the name della scala (of the stairs). This is now a precious relic, though much injured, in the museum at Parma. The famous *Notte*, now in Dresden and the St. Jerome, still in Parma, both oil pictures, were painted when the fresco was interrupted by cold weather. In the *Notte*, Correggio was the first to make use of the light proceeding from the Holy Child, illuminating the Virgin Mother and other figures. A pearly radiance surrounds the infant Jesus, shines warmly on the mild face of the Madonna who bends over him, with looks of love and wonder, glances on the figure of Joseph, the rude shepherd, and a peasant girl entering the stable with an offering of doves, who hides her eyes with her hand, as though to shade them from the sudden brilliancy. The eye, after being conducted into the deep recesses of the background, and discovering the more distant figures by the grey glimmer of early morning, falls again on a lesser light above, where an adoring group of angels hover over the lowly birth-place of Messiah. This picture has been unhappily injured by cleaning. The St. Jerome is in a more perfect state. In this painting, St. Jerome, a grave and dignified figure, of a deep color and powerful frame, is offering a volume to the Virgin and child, in which an angel is pointing out some passage, while the Magdalen bends to kiss the foot of the infant Jesus, with a face beaming with beauty, love and tenderness. The innocent playfulness, mixed with seriousness, of the babe, the charming grace and simplicity of the Virgin, the venerable and benevolent air of St. Jerome, and, above all, the sweetness and pious emotion of Mary Magdalen, as she devoutly touches her lips to the feet of the child, combine to make this one of the most fascinating groups which can be conceived. The color is surprisingly rich and full, yet from within shines that saving purity of Correggio's, like pearls and silver over which a golden sunlight pours.

Before completing his last grand work, the Assumption of the Virgin in the Cathedral, he executed at various intervals several classic and amatory subjects, a Danae, Venus hiding Cupid's bow, Leda with the swan, Jupiter and Antiope, Io embraced by Jupiter veiled in cloud, etc. These mythological pictures are imbued with the genuine spirit of the ancients. They betray an acquaintance with the antique, caused doubtless by the study of the cameos and medals at Mantua. His undulating and well rounded forms, pure and delicate color, gentle flow and intermingling of lights and shadows, were qualities well adapted to these subjects. Under his pencil Venus rises resplendent with charms; Danae reclines upon her splendid couch, grace in all her youthful limbs, receiving with unaffected pleasure the golden shower. Cupids sharpen their darts with childish glee, or ride the gales, or fling the flowers. Antiope (now in the Louvre) reposes in the green wood, her eyelids softly closed, while Cupid near by slumbers on his bow and quiver, and Jupiter, in form of a brown satyr, draws the

slight drapery from her soft and lustrous form, making indeed

"A sunshine in a shady place."

The warmth and gaiety of Anacreon are united to the elegance of Horace in these most animated and dainty realizations of ancient fable. In moral influence they are to be condemned, for in their voluptuous beauty they tremble on the borders of licentiousness, if indeed they do not actually overstep. In excellence of execution, and in fully embodying the essential ideas of amorous and bacchanal legends, in the glow of soft desire and the unrestrained enjoyment of the world's love and pleasure, they are unequalled except by the Galatea of Raphael, and that they surpass in light and color.

The corruptions of that age, one in which the learned and the clergy even were generally tainted with a taste for classic *indulgences*, as well as classic literature, offer, not an excuse, but a reason for Correggio's frailty in this respect. From Correggio's Antiope sprang the Ariadne of Vanderlyn, the engraving of which is Durand's masterpiece, and the last engraving by him of importance before he entered on his still more successful course as a painter.

The small reading Magdalen in the Dresden Gallery, and which tradition says was painted for a poor monk—Antonio's father-confessor (what a priceless fee?)—is one of the most perfect of his easel pictures. She is lying on the ground in a deeply-shaded grotto; one hand supports her head as she bends over a large book. The light falling full upon the pages, is reflected softly upon her face and neck, revealing a countenance of entrancing loveliness, shaded by a pensive melancholy. Her fair hair falls waving in luxuriant masses over her shoulders and arms, and a deep blue drapery which wraps her form, adds to the luminous clearness of her sunlighted book, hair, and bosom, and gives atmosphere to the sombre cave and forest which her beauty irradiates. Without having seen this gem, it is impossible to conceive what magic power resides in the painter's Art. The Agony in the Garden is another of his exquisite small pictures. Our Saviour is in prayer. An angel hovering near points to the mystic cross and thorns with one hand, with the other heavenward, suggesting the will of the Father and the brightness of the future glory. The angel's face is in sympathy with the sorrow and resignation of our Lord. The light, of a pearly hue, seems to descend from Heaven full upon Christ, and to be reflected on the angel: in the distance, wrapped in shade, sleep the three disciples, and beyond, a tumult of officers, led by Judas, are hurrying to the betrayal; a faint streak of dawn is seen in the far horizon through branches of old olive trees. The effect of night and space is wonderfully given. At the first glance you see only Christ and the ministering angel shining in purest light; as you gaze, the other figures begin to emerge, and the broken bank of earth, the trees, and foreground plants, become gradually visible. The legend says this picture was given by the painter to pay a debt of four crowns to his chemist, and by him sold soon after for five hundred to a noble family. We know that it was bought by Philip IV., of Spain, for

750 doubloons (about \$12,000). Joseph Bonaparte seized it when the French invaded Spain, as a precious reward of victory. On his flight from Madrid, he concealed it in his carriage, but it was captured by the English, and is now at Apsley House, one of the spoils of triumphant Wellington. During several of the latter years of his life, Correggio was occupied in painting for the canons of the Cathedral at Parma, a grand fresco in the cupola representing the Assumption of the Virgin. The treatment is grand. Christ descends from above with attendant groups of saints: lower down the Madonna floats upward, supported by choirs of rejoicing angels. This is the upper portion of the dome. Below, and between long windows, are the Apostles, singly or in groups, wrapt in contemplation of the glorified Virgin. In the four lunettes, supporting the whole, are the four patron saints of Parma seated on clouds with attendant angels. The whole composition forms a grand chorus of triumphant saints, angels, and cherubs, joyfully floating in mid Heaven, and shouting hallelujahs to the ascending Virgin. Over all is poured a celestial radiance, harmonizing and uniting the vast assemblage. The separate parts of this great work are treated in a broad and noble style; there is a massive simplicity in the drawing and relief, and a light and shade in which grandeur and force are combined with the gentlest diffusion. The foreshortening is bold, and, seen from below, the fault is of too great profusion of figures and a chaos of legs. Some wag of Parma said, "You have given us a fricassee of frogs!"—and poor Antonio smarted under the joke, which will stick to him for ever. The splendid series of engravings after this, and the dome of St. Giovanni, by Toschi (now, alas! interrupted by his death), are superior to any translations of Correggio yet given, and fully convey his merit in all but color, and even that is suggested. In painting the Assumption he used small models in clay, prepared by the sculptor Begarelli, by which to study the masses and foreshortening: one of these was found on the moulding of the cupola, some fifty years' since, by a Florentine painter. The canons of the cathedral interfered with him while the work was in progress, complained of some of the figures being too small, annoyed him about the payments, and, it is said, in a quarrel with Antonio, appealed to Titian, then on a visit to Parma in the train of the Emperor, Charles V., to decide if they should destroy the work, or allow the artist to proceed. Titian rebuked them, exclaiming, with horror, "Destroy this picture! it is the finest I ever saw; were I not Titian, I should wish to be Correggio;" a sentence full both of appreciation of Correggio and of the senatorial pride of Venice. Before this last great work was completed, Antonio died suddenly of a fever in his forty-first year. It is not known whether he ever visited Rome; but rumor says that he saw some picture of Raphael's, and, after gazing on it long in silence, he at last exclaimed, "*Ed io anche son pittore,*" and *I too am a painter*. Truly he loved the divine Art, and all his soul is expressed in his works. Some drawings which have been preserved, indicate the infinite care he took in the studies

for his pictures. To him Art is indebted for the charm of a harmony which arises from perfect gradation, and that depth and fullness of composition caused by foreshortening and bold perspective.

D. HUNTINGTON.

#### HISTORY AND PROGRESS OF BANK NOTE ENGRAVING.

BANK NOTE engraving in this country, having of late years become legitimately entitled to rank as a branch of the fine, as well as useful arts, a few words in relation to its history and progress will not be out of place, or uninteresting to the readers of the Crayon, all of whom are more or less familiar with its productions, while not a few have with their skill and genius assisted in their execution.

The earliest engraved notes of which we have any distinct recollection, and we think they were the first put into circulation in this country, were those issued by the Bank of North America; an institution chartered by the provincial Congress, upon the recommendation of the patriot financier of the Revolutionary epoch, Robert Morris, for the purpose of aiding the government during its pressing financial difficulties.

These notes were embellished by a small vignette of graceful design, which was, we believe, engraved by the elder Heath. The promissory part of the note was printed with type made in this country. This vignette was subsequently copied by Fairman, on a steel die, and continued to be for many years the special design for all the notes of this bank. As this bank was the *first*, it continued for some time the *only* one in the country, and therefore may be considered as the mother of the large family which now has a member in almost every village of the Union—embellishing our architecture with handsome structures, and furnishing the community with a currency which, if not always the soundest, is certainly the most beautiful in the world.

In the minutes of the directors of the bank, there occurs a resolution, offered at the suggestion of Franklin, providing for the issue of notes of the denomination of *one cent*. The director, in proposing the resolution, remarked that Franklin had just imported some paper from London which would answer to print them upon. Thus, while furnishing the public with "small change," "Poor Richard" would be enabled to turn a penny on his own account. The charter of this bank was a perpetual one, but having been granted by the provincial Congress, was exchanged when the federal government went into operation, for one from the State of Pennsylvania, under which it has continued to exist until this time, sustaining a reputation not surpassed by any similar institution in the world.

Shortly after the establishment of the federal government, Congress chartered the first bank of the United States; and the legislatures of many of the States also granted similar privileges to capitalists. Engravers at this period were few in number and "mediocre" in talent; but the notes they produced were far superior to those issued by the banks of England or France, and the counterfeiter found them no doubt quite as difficult of imitation as he does the more elaborate and highly

finished engravings of the present day. Scott and Harrison appear to have been the favorite, and perhaps were the only engravers at this time; and in the department of lettering, they were remarkably skillful. It was not long, however, before greater skill was found to be necessary, and a company was accordingly formed under the title of "Murray, Draper & Fairman"—a name that subsequently became familiar to the whole community, and such was its reputation, that the imprint alone, for a long period, would give currency to a note, as it also proved its genuineness. The senior partner, George Murray, was an Englishman, who had been employed by Bradford to copy several plates for the Encyclopedia, and had executed the work in the most satisfactory manner. Mr. Draper was a pupil of Scott, and had for several years been engaged in engraving the lettering for several banks, which he had executed in a style so beautiful, as even at this day to attract the attention and admiration of the lovers of the chirographic art. Gideon Fairman was a self-taught artist, in the true meaning of the term, he never having had the assistance of a teacher, or a single lesson, excepting one from a travelling tinker, whom he had seen cut a cypher on a pewter spoon. He had been several years established in Albany, and while there had designed and engraved plates for banks in New-York and New-Orleans, which have seldom been surpassed, either in beauty of design or skillfulness in execution.

In addition to their own talent as engravers, these artists, to give greater security to their work, called to their aid an ingenious mechanic (Mr. Brewster) who had made a steel die by the means of a variety of small punches, of a very complicated character, and difficult to imitate. This die was impressed by machinery upon the margin of the notes, and a small oval one of the same character was employed for the denominational figures. With these two universal features, and a new vignette for every bank and each denomination, this company, for a period of about fifteen years, continued to monopolize the bank note engraving of the whole country, with the exception of a portion of the New-England States; but as it is too frequently the case in the absence of competition, there was no improvement in the character of this work generally, though now and then there were single exceptions.

In the meantime, Jacob Perkins, of Newburyport, Mass., a very ingenious mechanic, subsequently well known as the inventor of the steam gun, and also for many interesting philosophical experiments—made a set of plates to which was given the name of "Perkins' stereotype steel plates." These plates were composed of steel blocks covered with engraving, principally the denomination in very small letters, which being many times repeated, was supposed to give great security against counterfeiting. Grooves, or open spaces, were made for the insertion of the title of the bank and its location, consequently but one set of plates, comprising the various denominations, were required; and as they were case-hardened, all the banks in that part of the country were furnished with impressions that were *identically* the same. They became so popular, that several of the legislatures

made it one of the conditions of a charter, that the notes should be printed from these plates. This identity however, which was for a long time their chief merit, proved in the end to be the principal objection to the system; as a successful imitation of any one of the notes was in fact an imitation of the whole circulation. The field being so large a one, the attention of counterfeiters was directed to it; and after repeated attempts, so perfect a fac-simile was made as to induce the legislature to remove all restrictive measures in relation to the engraving of notes—and those from the "Perkins' stereotype steel plates" soon after became obsolete. The engraving on these plates was probably the first ever executed upon steel, and the world is indebted to Mr. Perkins for all the advantages which have resulted from the substitution of this metal in place of copper. It may be proper in this connection to mention, that Mr. Perkins also invented and brought into successful-use the ink-roller, in place of the *dabber*, which had been universally used, not only for letter-press but copper-plate printing. And if we are not mistaken, he was the first to make *transfers* of fine engravings from hardened steel plates to steel cylinders, and re-transfers to flat plates; thus enabling the engraver to multiply his finest work, preserving the original, and yet repeating it on other plates to any extent, so that the labor of months and years even may be re-engraved as it were in a few minutes. This invention may be justly considered as the first great improvement in the art, as it enabled the engravers to bestow much more time on the execution of the originals, and thus led to the excellence of the work now to be seen on all the notes executed in this country. It also brought into use a new species of work—which has not yet been superseded—as a background for the denomination, and as an additional security against counterfeiting. This work was produced by a geometric lathe invented by Asa Spencer, a watchmaker, living at the time in New-London, Conn., and was the result of an attempt to imitate the rose engine turnings on the backs of watch cases. The figures produced by this lathe are as varied and endless as those of the kaleidoscope, while those of the French lathe were limited to a given number of patterns. Other ingenious modifications of the principle were subsequently made by Cyrus Durand. Mr. Spencer also invented a machine for dividing, graduating, and ruling straight or waved lines, which, with an addition by Mr. Gobrecht of Philadelphia, produced a new and beautiful style of engraving, called medallion ruling, and thus added a new feature, as well as additional security, to bank notes.

Bank note engraving had advanced to this state, when, in 1819, at the suggestion of Sir Charles Bagot, at that time resident British minister at Washington, Messrs. Perkins and Fairman, accompanied by Mr. Spencer and C. Toppan, went to London for the purpose of presenting specimens of their work to the Bank of England—the bank then contemplating an entire change in its circulation, in consequence of the large number of counterfeiters then in circulation, and the strong feeling produced in the public mind by the frequency and severity of the punishment, the result of these